

PARTICIPATION HANDOUT

(Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Workshops with NGOs/CBOs Responding to HIV/AIDS. (2001)
International HIV/AIDS Alliance.
<http://www.aidsalliance.org/sw7455.asp>)

PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES:

- Are **active** (hands-on!), locally-based, creative, formal/informal, artful, group approaches that encourage people to think for themselves and act together.
- Are used in situations where a number of people must **work together to resolve a common problem**.

THEY ARE IMPORTANT BECAUSE:

- We all have something to contribute- **we are ALL part of the solution**. Think about the Puzzle game: we needed everyone's piece to see and understand the whole, big picture!
- They aim to **raise the voice of** all people, especially **groups that usually do not have a voice**.
- They encourage the involvement of those directly involved who have the **local knowledge and understanding** (this means the response/activity/project will be more effective and appropriate).
- They **promote working together**, and today's big issues and problems are too big for one person to tackle alone!
- They promote the **building of trust and peaceful relationship** as we learn to work together, and this makes dealing with sensitive issues less difficult.
- As people become more experienced with the approach, they **build skills** that they can take back to their own work or household. (Capacity building!)
- As people become more experience with the approach, they take more and more **responsibility** for planning their own learning and doing their own projects. (Empowerment and sustainability!)

Advantages and disadvantages of participatory approaches to learning

Advantages

- ✓ They use inexpensive resources.
- ✓ They can be used in any physical setting.
- ✓ They are interesting and fun – helping to involve people in the subject.
- ✓ They help people to build self-confidence.
- ✓ They help people to learn about themselves.
- ✓ They help people to understand the perspectives of others.
- ✓ Participants with different degrees of experience and literacy can use them.
- ✓ They prevent individuals from being singled out for what they know, or don't know.
- ✓ They are less intimidating for less confident participants.
- ✓ They can help people to analyse complex situations.
- ✓ Outcomes are often documented during the process and do not depend on jargon.
- ✓ They are memorable.
- ✓ Lessons learnt can be brought back to local communities or organisations.

Disadvantages

- ✗ They are difficult to plan, because planning often depends on what the participants want to do.
- ✗ Involving stakeholders takes time.
- ✗ It can take time for people who are used to being "pupils" rather than "participants" to feel comfortable with these approaches.
- ✗ Facilitator techniques can be difficult to master and use effectively.
- ✗ They can make people feel uncomfortable, for example about drawing.
- ✗ They can be difficult to document in a report format but can be documented well using photographs or by keeping flipcharts.
- ✗ Some people may not consider them to be valid ways of working.
- ✗ Participants may be more focused on the creative, rather than learning, aspect of the activity.
- ✗ It can be difficult to establish clear action points or conclusions from the activity.